

## Editorial Department.

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### PHILANTHROPY VERSUS SCIENCE.

THERE has been a decided advance made in getting American hospitals for the insane out of the rut in which they were being run by a set of mutual admirationists ; but this advance has been in the direction of humanitarianism rather than scientific progress, and it would appear that scientific progress was somewhat incompatible with the humanitarian cant which has of late afflicted both the great English-speaking countries. The professional philanthropist is abroad, and in the desire to appear humane to the insane he exhibits much the same characteristics as the mother who spoils her child for fear of hearing it cry. The English have at the head of their professional philanthropists the Earl of Shaftesbury, the nature of whose intellectual operations may be judged from the following testimony given before a parliamentary investigation committee : " I think something has been said about having what they call a system of special doctors. I confess to you that I have a very great fear of a special doctor. But, assuming them to be good, in the first place they must be very numerously spread over England and Wales, because they are wanted at the instant, and were there not an ample supply of them you would have to send a great distance to reach these special doctors. I should like to see how Parliament would define a special doctor before I can give an opinion. I confess I should be very much alarmed if there were persons who kept themselves exclusively to that study without a constant experience of both, of all the various circumstances that beset lunacy at large and

under confinement, moral as well as physical, that attend it; all the social circumstances, the ten thousand other circumstances.

\* \* \* I remember the case very well of a medical man, a doctor, an excellent man, who thought that I had some influence in obtaining the appointment of medical men to the commission. I knew him very well. He came to me and told me what he wished. To show his extraordinary knowledge of the subject, he gave me a sheet of paper as big as that, with a list of the forms of insanity. 'My dear sir,' said I, 'this will never do; if you reduce your principles to practice you will shut up nine tenths of the people in England,' and so they would. If you have special doctors they would shut up people by the score." And the man who is capable of uttering the arrant nonsense contained in the latter part of this quotation is regarded as a well-informed man! Such puerile reasoning would disgrace a school-boy. To the cant of such philanthropists is due the widely-prevalent error concerning the frequent incarceration of sane people and the publication of items reflecting on alienists, like the following: "Editors threaten to become experts in craziness, while mad doctors have fallen into grave disrepute. Mrs. Weldon, despite her eccentricity and vanity, is hailed as a public benefactor because of the light she has thrown on the laxity of the law, and has been granted a new trial in the case against a 'mad doctor' lately decided against her in a very strong judgment by one of the courts. While thus she has gained public opinion to her side, she has estranged it from her by the restlessness of her *desire for notoriety, singing in a low-class music hall after having been the friend and companion of Gounod and one of the most fashionable vocalists of London.*" A poor insane woman, who has the ability of the paranoiac and the moral perversity sometimes accompanying that psychosis, rouses the sensation-lovers by a tale of incarceration in an hospital for the insane, and is in consequence permitted to disgrace herself and her friends by indulgence in vicious conduct, which is the product of cerebral lesions, when but for the unscientific cant of philanthropists like the Earl of Shaftesbury and others like him in authority, she would have

remained under the conscientious surveillance of an alienist or in the kindly shelter of an hospital for the insane. It is scarcely astonishing that Dr. Boyd, who lately met with so melancholy a fate, should protest against the procedures of the Earl of Shaftesbury's commission as injurious to the best interests of science and the insane. The scientific alienist is the best friend of the insane, and any dilettante philanthropy which thwarts his efforts is a curse to science and humanity. Dilettante philanthropy has practically emasculated English psychiatry, and the ultimate object of the same now appears to be directed to the comfort of the insane in the spoiled-child sense rather than cure. Dr. Godding well says : " In the temple of psychiatry to-day modern philanthropy writes over all this inscription : ' He opened the doors. He broke the chains,' " and says there is no higher line than that. But the humanity of another age will write above it : " And they brought unto him those who were lunatics, and he *healed* them."

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#### HALF-TRUTHS ON THE WITNESS-STAND.

IT cannot be denied that a spirit of partisanship too often enters into expert investigation ; while this is to be regretted, it is necessarily unavoidable, from the nature of things, when the physician, from at first hearing only one side of the case, unconsciously acquires a bias from which he is afterward unable to rid himself. While some of the differences in expert testimony are to be referred to this cause, the great differences arise from a different state of things. Dr. H. B. Wilbur, a short time before his death, said : " Expert testimony should be the colorless light of science brought to bear upon any case where it is summoned. It should be impartial, unprejudiced. There should be no half-truths uttered ; and suppression of the whole truth is in the nature of false testimony." It is to this last circumstance that the great evils of expert testimony are to be referred. The expert does not state the whole truth of science on the subject, but only such phases as fit the case. In the Laros case, for example,